

Lifelong Learning: An Economic Imperative

A Workshop-Presentation to the SkillPlan Board of Directors

8:00 a.m.

Tuesday, March 4th, 1997

Carpenters and Joiners Local 1955

305/ 204- 2806 Kingsway

Burnaby

(Contact: Peter Norris @ 437-0471)

Overview of Presentation Timing:

<i>1 Minute</i>	Linda Mitchell	Introduction to Literacy BC
<i>5 Minutes</i>	Linda Mitchell	Overview of IALS
<i>8 Minutes</i>	Stacey Huget	Implications of IALS for Labour
<i>1 Minute</i>	Stacey Huget	Overview of Workforce Education Initiative
<i>5 Minutes</i>	All	Q&A

Presentation:

Introduction to Literacy BC (Linda - 1 Minute)

- . Who and what is Literacy B.C.
- . Involvement in Workforce Education
 - Foundation Skills Project
 - Workforce Education Initiative (which Stacey will say more about later)

Overview of IALS (Linda - 5 Minutes)

- . IALS objectives, methodology, and participants

- definition of literacy and “myth busters”
 - literacy means more than the basic ability to read and write; it also reflects a person’s ability to understand and use information
 - literacy levels, like muscles, are maintained and strengthened through regular use
 - important differences in literacy skill do exist across and within countries. Canadians do not do as well as adults in some countries on both document literacy and quantitative literacy. As well, there is considerable variation in the literacy skills of Canadians in different regions.
 - the current demographic structures of labour markets in Canada and throughout the industrialized world are such that whatever barriers to productivity and innovation are implied in the literacy study are likely to persist over the next few decades.
- breakdown of literacy levels (i.e. 1 through 5)
- literacy skills measured in literacy (*and sample questions*)
 - prose
 - document
 - quantitative
- findings for Canada relative to those for other countries
- follow up activities re: IALS

Implications of IALS for Labour (Stace - 8 Minutes)

Lower levels of literacy correspond with lower levels of income/earnings, with higher levels of unemployment, with fewer weeks worked per year, and with greater reliance on income support.

- those with Level 1 literacy are more likely than those with Level 4/5 to make under \$27,000 per year.
- the lower the level of literacy an individual has the greater the likelihood that he or she is unemployed.
- the facts are that:
 - that the lower one’s level of literacy, the fewer number of weeks per year they are employed

- that unemployed people are 3 times more likely to have level 1 literacy than those who are employed – leading as we have seen to a major income penalty for low literacy levels and meaning that literacy can be both a cause and a consequence of employment and income success.

- literacy is strongly associated with life chances and the use of opportunities, at work and in the community. Literacy helps people maintain their independence and quality of life and participate actively in society.

The workplace imposes the greatest demand on people for literacy levels... and lower levels of literacy correspond with lower self-ratings of writing skills for work.

- reading is the most common literacy activity at work; it's simply the nature of the reading that varies by one's level of literacy... Those at a higher level of literacy tend to read more complex materials more often ... but about even those at level 1 are required to do a considerable amount of reading.
- similarly, those whose reading skills are the lowest tend to represent those occupations that are in decline – machine operators, elementary occupations, and skilled craftsmen and agricultural workers – while those whose reading skills are higher tend to represent those occupations that are growing in numbers – clerks, technicians, professionals, service workers, and professionals.
- reading is the most common literacy activity at work; literacy rich jobs *are* key to maintaining one's literacy skills. The demand for literacy skills varies among occupations – with the higher skilled people engaging more frequently in literacy-related activities.
- in an emergent information economy, those lacking the skills and opportunities to access, organize, and use information in novel ways are at a disadvantage.
- adults today need a higher level of literacy to function well: society has become more complex and low-skill jobs are disappearing.

Lower levels of literacy correspond with lower participation in adult education or training.

- those having the lowest levels of literacy self-rate their writing skills at work as moderate or poor.
- those who most *need* to participate in training or adult education in some form or another simply don't have the access or encouragement to upgrade their skills.
- instead of enlarging the pool of highly skilled workers, the tendency for employers, individuals, and governments has been to increase the skills of the already skilled. The reserve employment pool, made up of the unemployed and those working in declining industrial sectors is low-skilled. Policies directed toward providing more educational opportunities and increasing skills in that pool should be a necessary part of any industrial growth strategy.

March 13/97

SJA

Apprentice and Training Co-ordinators - IALS Presentation -

Handouts:

Literacy BC Information Kit

Workforce Education Initiative Overview

Reading the Future

NLS Overheads:

1	Cover	International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)
2	Text	Objectives of IALS
3	List	Eight Industrialized Countries: Partners in Literacy
7	Text	IALS Methodology
8	Graphic	IALS National Sample: Geographical Region
4	Definitions	Literacy Definition
5	Definitions	Literacy Skills Measured in IALS
6	Definitions	Literacy Levels
10	Graphic	International Prose Ratings
12	Graphic	Canada
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33	Graphic	Literacy and Training Participation: Prose Scale
44	Text	Follow Up to IALS

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<i>5 Minutes</i>	All	Q&A

Introduction to Literacy BC (*Linda - 1 Minute*)

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Overview of IALS (*Linda - 5 Minutes*)

- . Objectives of IALS
- . Eight Industrialized Countries: Partners in Literacy
- . IALS Methodology
- . IALS National Sample: Geographical Region
- . Literacy Definition
- . Literacy Skills Measured in IALS
- . Literacy Levels
- . International Prose Ratings
- . Canada Prose Ratings

Implications of IALS for ATC (Stace - 8 Minutes)

Distribution of Literacy (by Age)

Literacy is now more broadly defined as a person's ability to understand and to use information from a text – and is much more than just being able to read, write, or calculate.

Literacy problems affect large proportions of the adult population. Groups that are in special need are seniors, some immigrants, and older workers. There are large numbers of older Canadians with low skills

While there are groups that are in special need – seniors, older workers, and some immigrants – literacy problems, for the most part, are not restricted to marginalized members of society.

Of those surveyed, the percentages of those with only level 1 or level 2 skills is significant:

- 64% of adults 56-65
- 51% of adults 46-55
- 32% of adults 36-45
- 41% of adults 26-53
- 37% of youth and young adults 16-25

Maintaining and improving literacy skills must be a key concern for all Canadians.

Literacy and Educational Attainment: Prose Scale

Literacy is associated with educational attainment but is not necessarily equivalent to it.

IALS demonstrates a strong link between education and literacy; educational attainment has been found to be at the heart of many of the literacy skill disparities across Canada. Typically, individuals who have an opportunity to complete their education get the skills they need.

Still, while this relationship is strong, it isn't perfect. Many people do not demonstrate the literacy skills one might expect, given their educational background. Other influences can have an effect.

In any event, literacy skills aren't "fixed". They are influenced by what people choose to do after leaving school. Individuals can lose or gain skills based on the extent to which they are used. Literacy skills learned at school must be reinforced by practise in the workplace and in the home – use it or lose it.

The latest group of Canadian school graduates are doing very well. The majority have strong literacy skills, but they need work experience to maintain them.

Literacy and Income

Lower levels of literacy correspond with lower levels of income/earnings and with greater reliance on income support.

There is an income penalty for individuals with weak literacy skills and a bonus for those with good skills: those with Level 1 literacy are more likely than those with Level 4/5 to make under \$27,000 per year.

Literacy and Employment Status: Prose Scale

Lower levels of literacy correspond with higher levels of unemployment and fewer weeks worked per year.

The unemployed people are 3 times more likely to have level 1 literacy than those who are employed.

Although people with low literacy skills are shown to have high rates of unemployment they do not, on the whole, recognize literacy as limiting their job prospects.

Because literacy skills are most often used in the workplace, the inability to find regular employment contributes to low skills. Chronically unemployed youth, for example, may not get experience needed to keep up or improve their literacy skills.

As well, there are millions of Canadians who are vulnerable because they don't have the literacy skills to cope if their current job vanishes – and they are all the more vulnerable because they don't realize the extent to which they are at risk.

Literacy Practice at Work: Reading tasks at least once a week

Given the fact of “use it or lose it” (i.e. that literacy skills can weaken if not used), the workplace provides a major opportunity for individuals to strengthen their literacy skills.

The workplace imposes the greatest demand on people for literacy levels. Reading is the most common literacy activity at work; it’s simply the nature of the reading that varies by one’s level of literacy... Those at a higher level of literacy tend to read more complex materials more often ... but about even those at level 1 are required to do a considerable amount of reading.

IALS data suggests that one of the characteristics of a “good job” is the opportunities it provides to maintain and enhance skill. Interestingly, comparisons with European countries reveal that, in some occupations, Canadians read less on the job than similar workers in Europe. How Canadian firms organize the way that work gets done has significant implications for the skills of their workforce.

Literacy and Occupational Change

Literacy rich jobs *are* key to maintaining one's literacy skills. The demand for literacy skills varies among occupations – with the higher skilled people engaging more frequently in literacy-related activities.

People whose reading skills are the lowest tend to represent those occupations that are in decline – machine operators, elementary occupations, and skilled craftsmen and agricultural workers – while those whose reading skills are higher tend to represent those occupations that are growing in numbers – clerks, technicians, professionals, service workers, and professionals.

These high growth occupations tend also to be high-wage paying while the low-growth, lower-literacy workplaces that are in stagnation or decline tend to be low-wage paying.

A comparison of high-demand occupations to those in decline indicates that Canadian workers in the future will require high literacy skills. Industries that have experienced growth are the ones whose employees have relatively high levels of skills; those in decline are characterized by workers with lower skills.

Literacy and Training Participation: Prose Scale

There is a growing gap between the profile of the literacy skills required by growing occupations and the skills of Canadians presently in our workforce. In addition, the reserve labour force, (made up of the unemployed and those working in declining industrial sectors), is low skilled.

Lower levels of literacy correspond with lower participation in adult education or training. Adult education and training is directed primarily to people who already have strong literacy skills. At the same time, individuals with weak literacy levels express the lowest demand for training programs.

Training programs that meet the needs of adults with low levels of literacy are particularly necessary; these are the people at the greatest risk of losing their place in the workforce, yet they receive the least amount of training.

Adults with low literacy do not always recognize that they have a problem. A broader awareness of the effect literacy has on income might alert more Canadians to the benefits of having higher literacy skills.

We need to break the “training cycle” to reach those individuals who don’t recognize the limitations of their literacy skills in order to encourage them to participate in training.

IALS outlines the extent of the challenge that remains to improve literacy skills in Canada - the need for the work of literacy organizations, literacy volunteers, literacy councils, and adult educators to continue.

Workforce and workplace-centered initiatives – undertaken as partnerships between business and labour and government – are a powerful response to the economic imperative of lifelong learning.

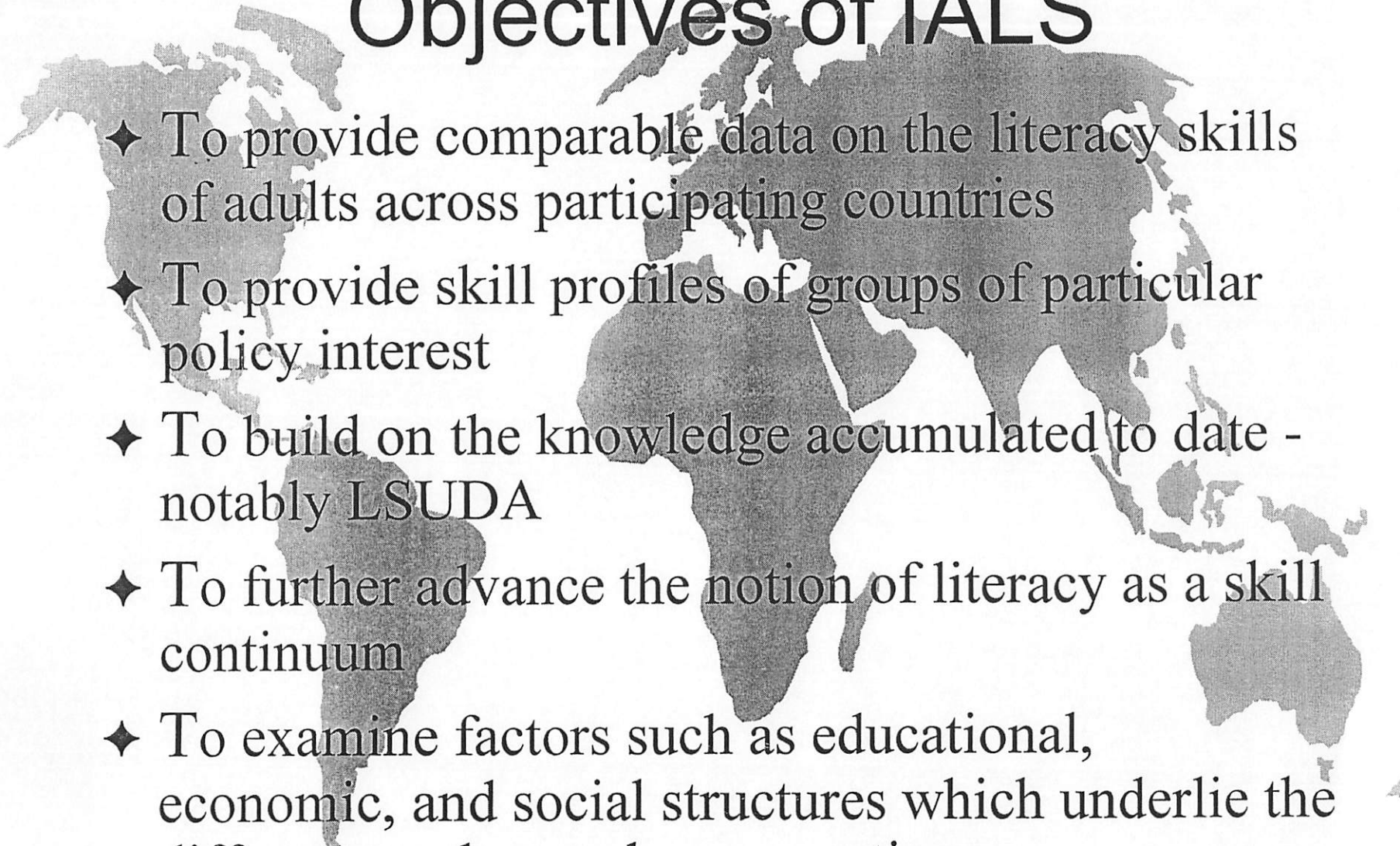
Overview of Workforce Education Initiative (Stace - 1 Minute)

Q&A



International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)

Objectives of IALS



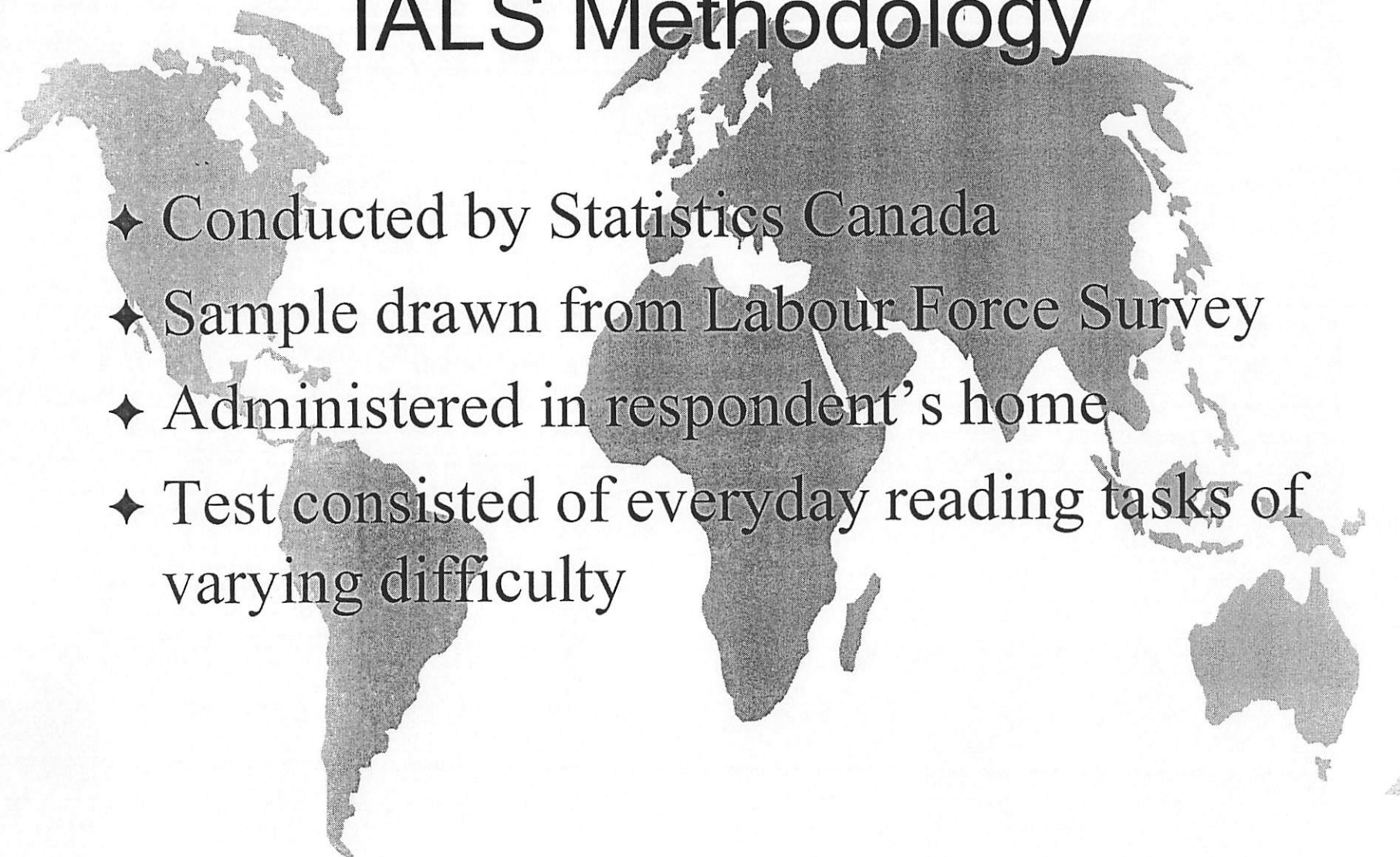
- ◆ To provide comparable data on the literacy skills of adults across participating countries
- ◆ To provide skill profiles of groups of particular policy interest
- ◆ To build on the knowledge accumulated to date - notably LSUDA
- ◆ To further advance the notion of literacy as a skill continuum
- ◆ To examine factors such as educational, economic, and social structures which underlie the differences observed across nations

Eight Industrialized Countries: Partners in Literacy

- 
- ◆ Canada
 - ◆ Germany
 - ◆ Ireland*
 - ◆ The Netherlands
 - ◆ Poland
 - ◆ Sweden
 - ◆ Switzerland
 - ◆ United States

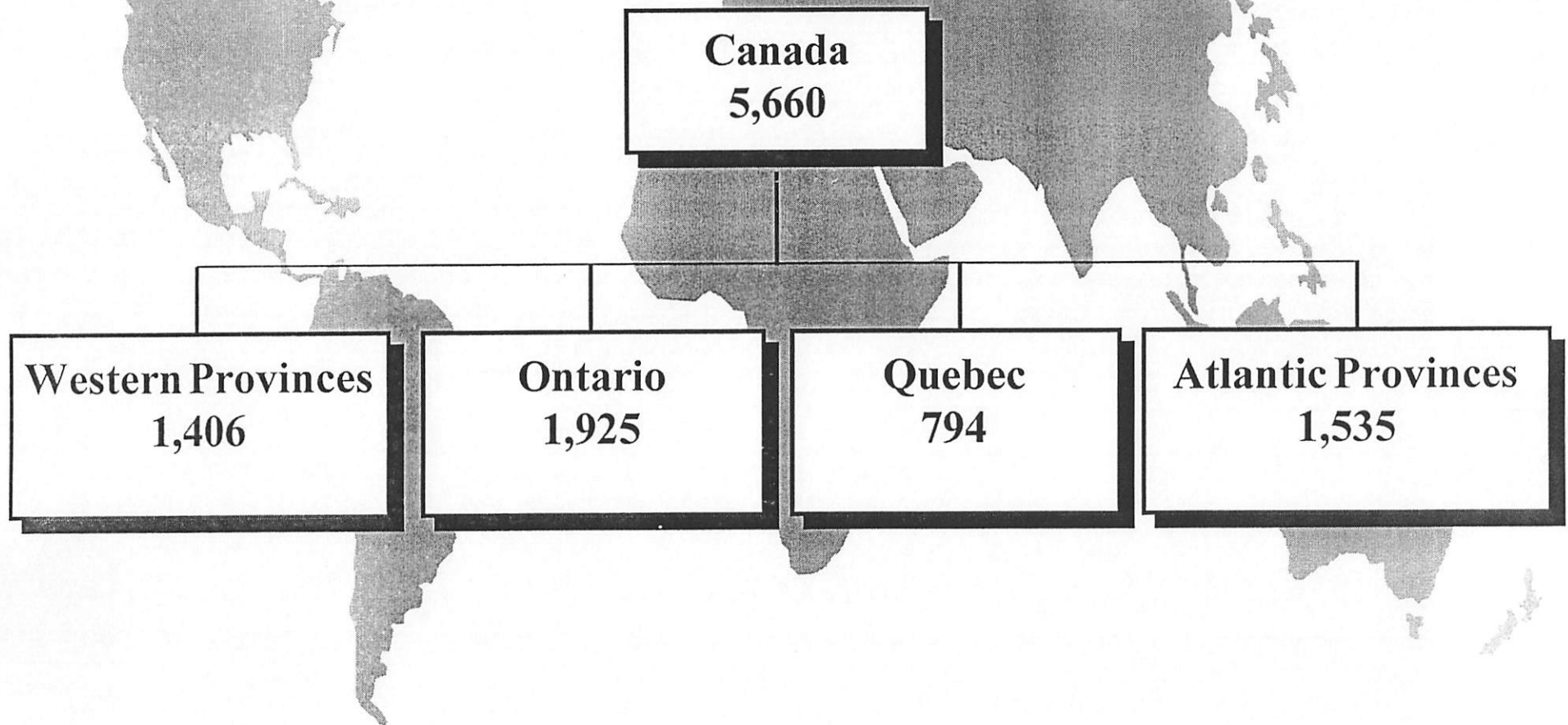
*not included in report

IALS Methodology



- ◆ Conducted by Statistics Canada
- ◆ Sample drawn from Labour Force Survey
- ◆ Administered in respondent's home
- ◆ Test consisted of everyday reading tasks of varying difficulty

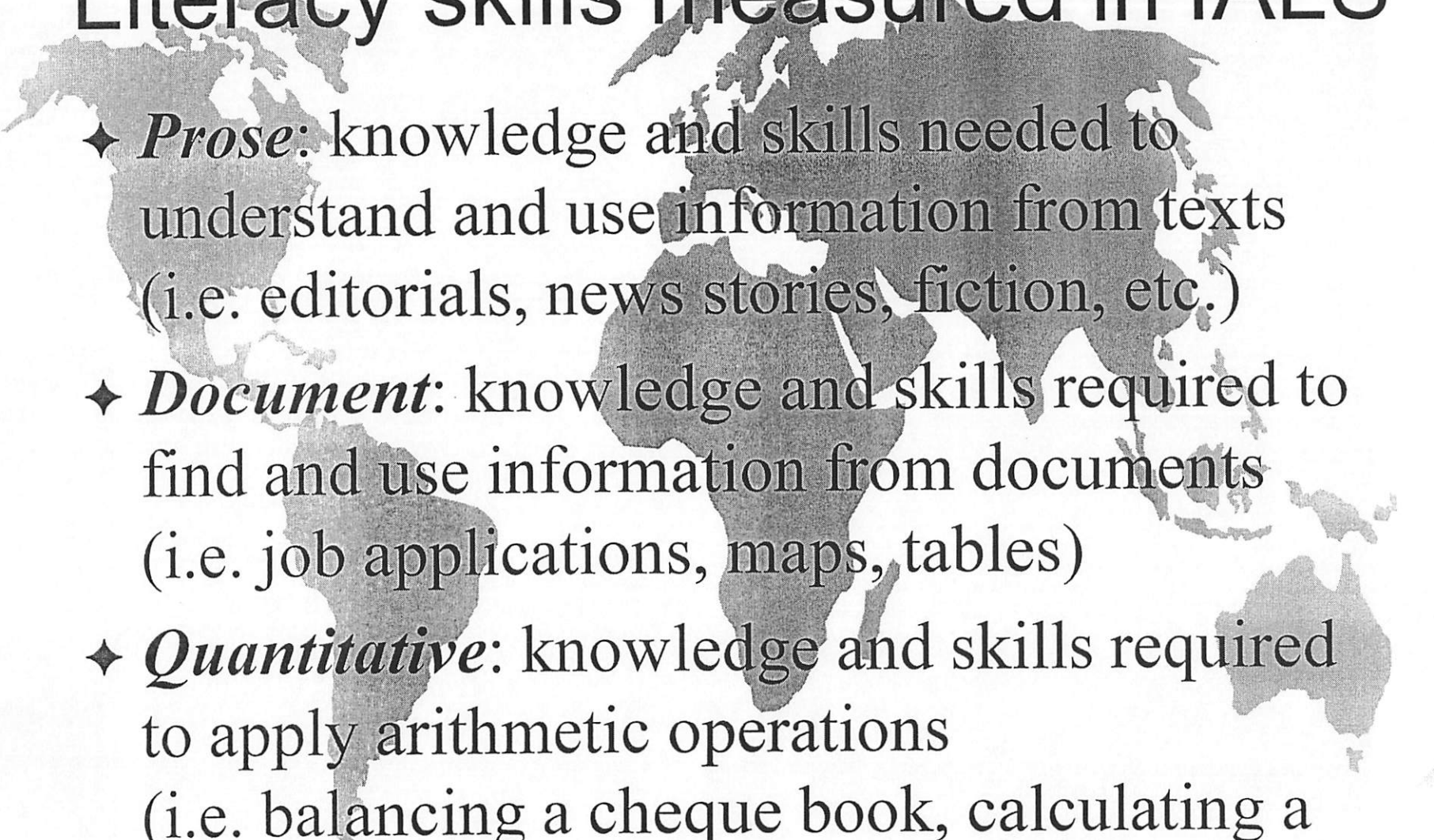
IALS National Sample: Geographical Region



Literacy Definition

The ability to *understand and employ* printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community -- to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential

Literacy skills measured in IALS

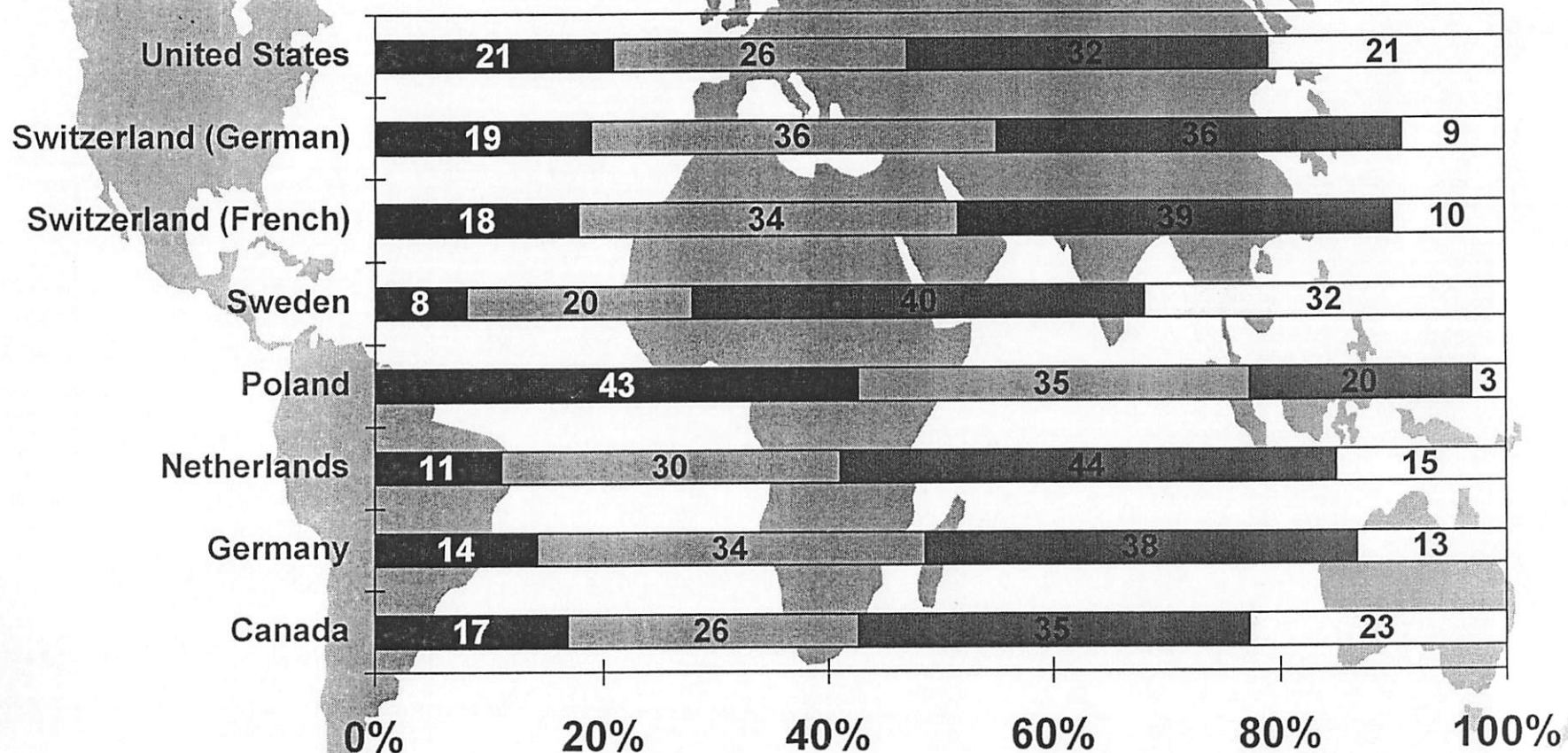


- ♦ ***Prose***: knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts (i.e. editorials, news stories, fiction, etc.)
- ♦ ***Document***: knowledge and skills required to find and use information from documents (i.e. job applications, maps, tables)
- ♦ ***Quantitative***: knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations (i.e. balancing a cheque book, calculating a tip, etc.)

Literacy Levels

Literacy Level	Definition
Level 1	• individuals have great difficulty reading • generally aware that they have a problem
Level 2	• reading, but not well • can deal with material that is simple and clearly laid out • often do not recognize their limitations
Level 3	• considered by many countries a basic skill level, but some occupations require higher skills
Level 4/5	• a high level of literacy • can meet most reading demands and handle new reading challenges

International Prose Ratings

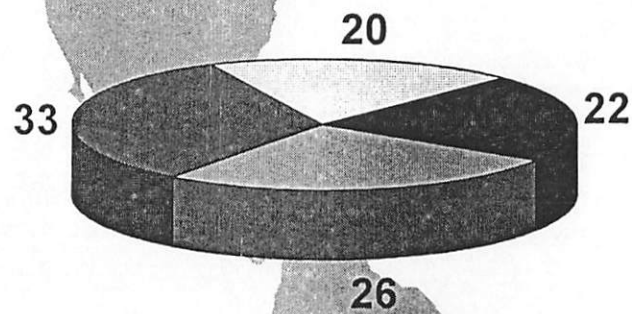


* age 16 to 65

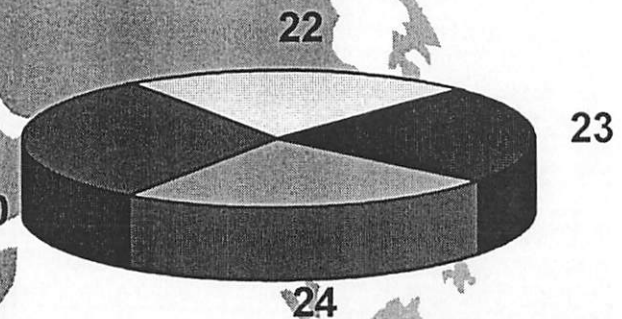
■ Level 1 ■ Level 2 ■ Level 3 □ Level 4/5

Canada

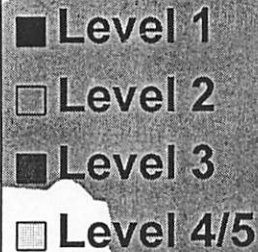
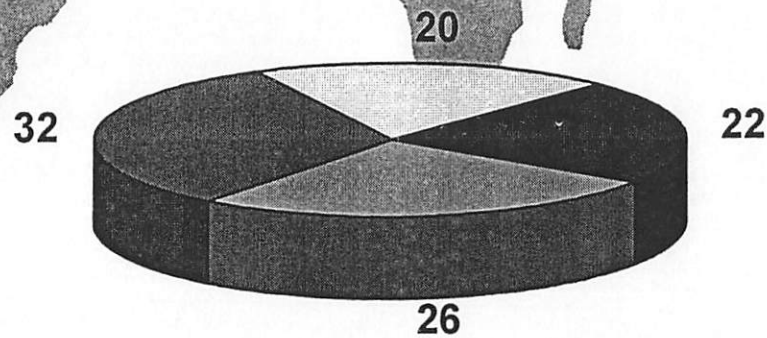
Prose Scale



Document Scale

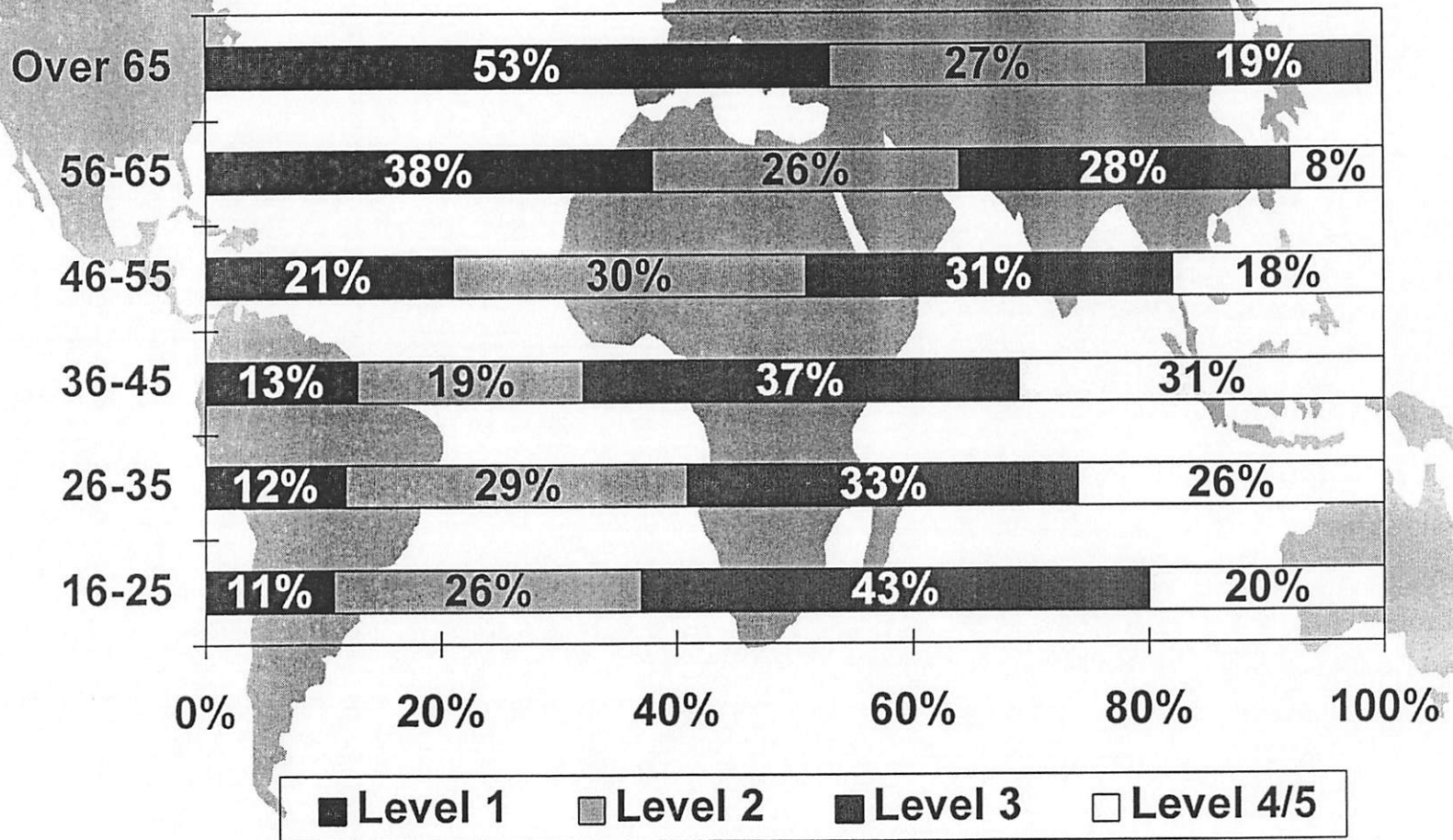


Quantitative Scale



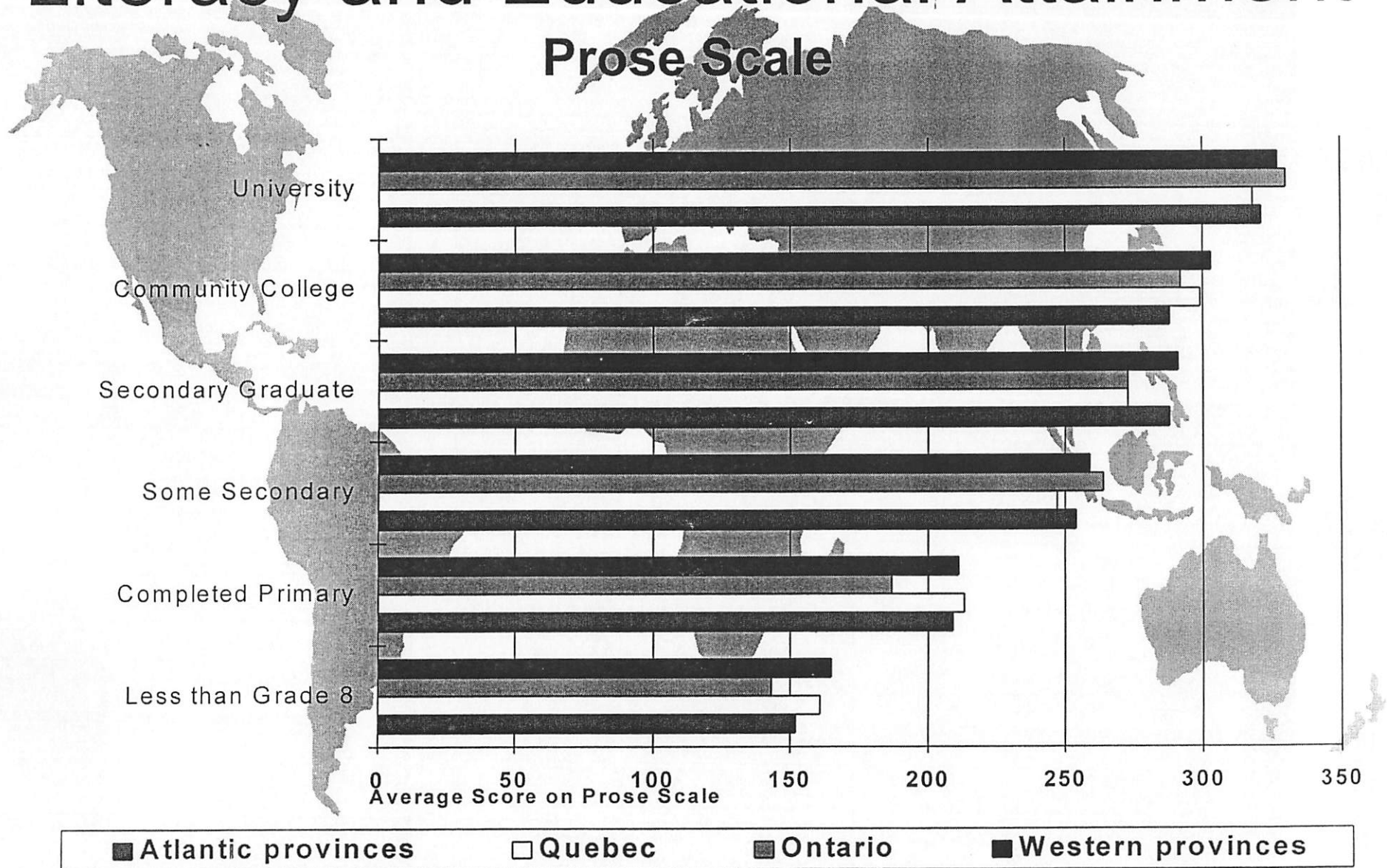
Distribution of Literacy by Age

Prose Scale



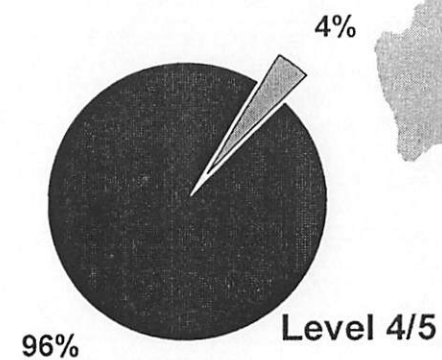
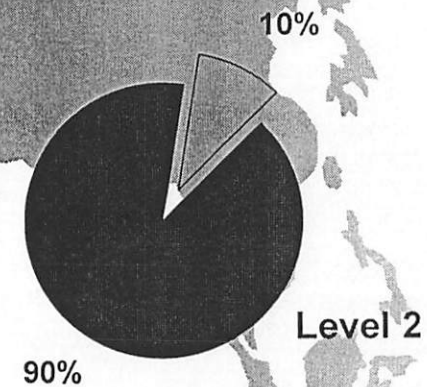
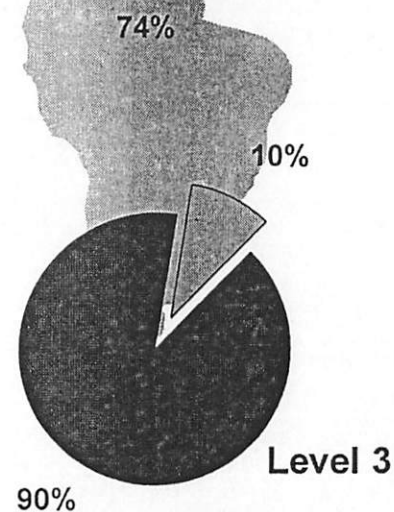
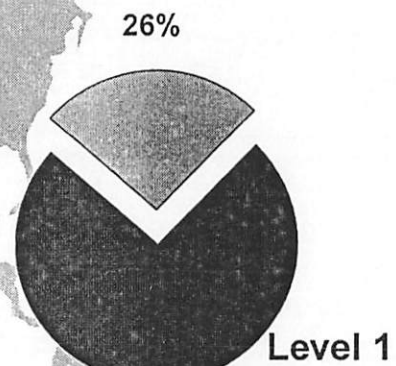
Literacy and Educational Attainment

Prose Scale



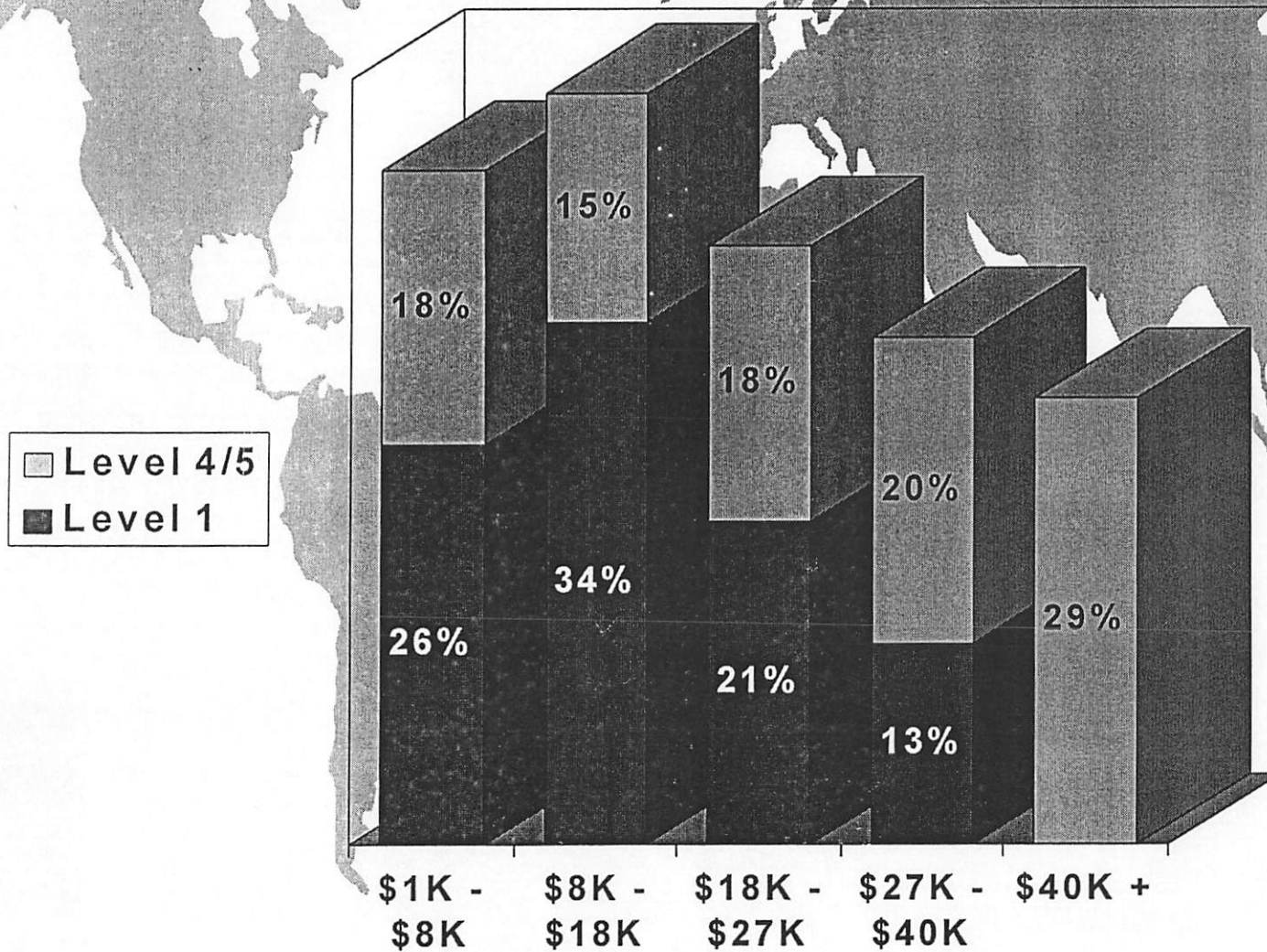
Literacy and Employment Status

Prose Scale



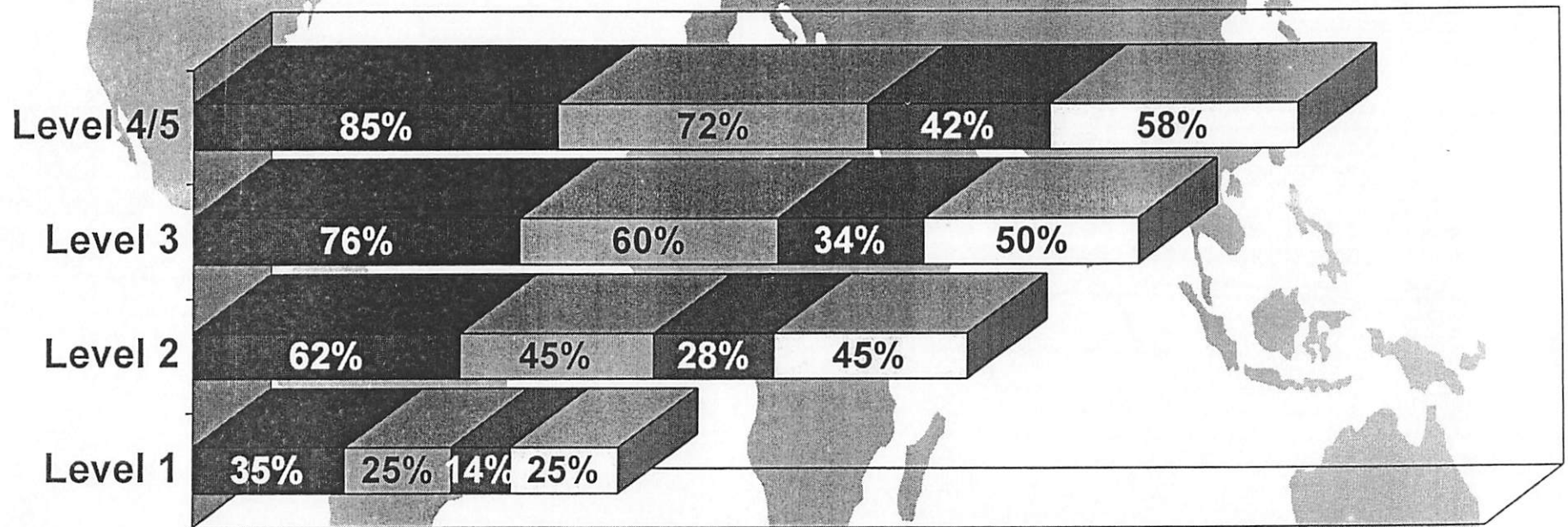
*Age 16 and over in the labour force

Literacy and Income



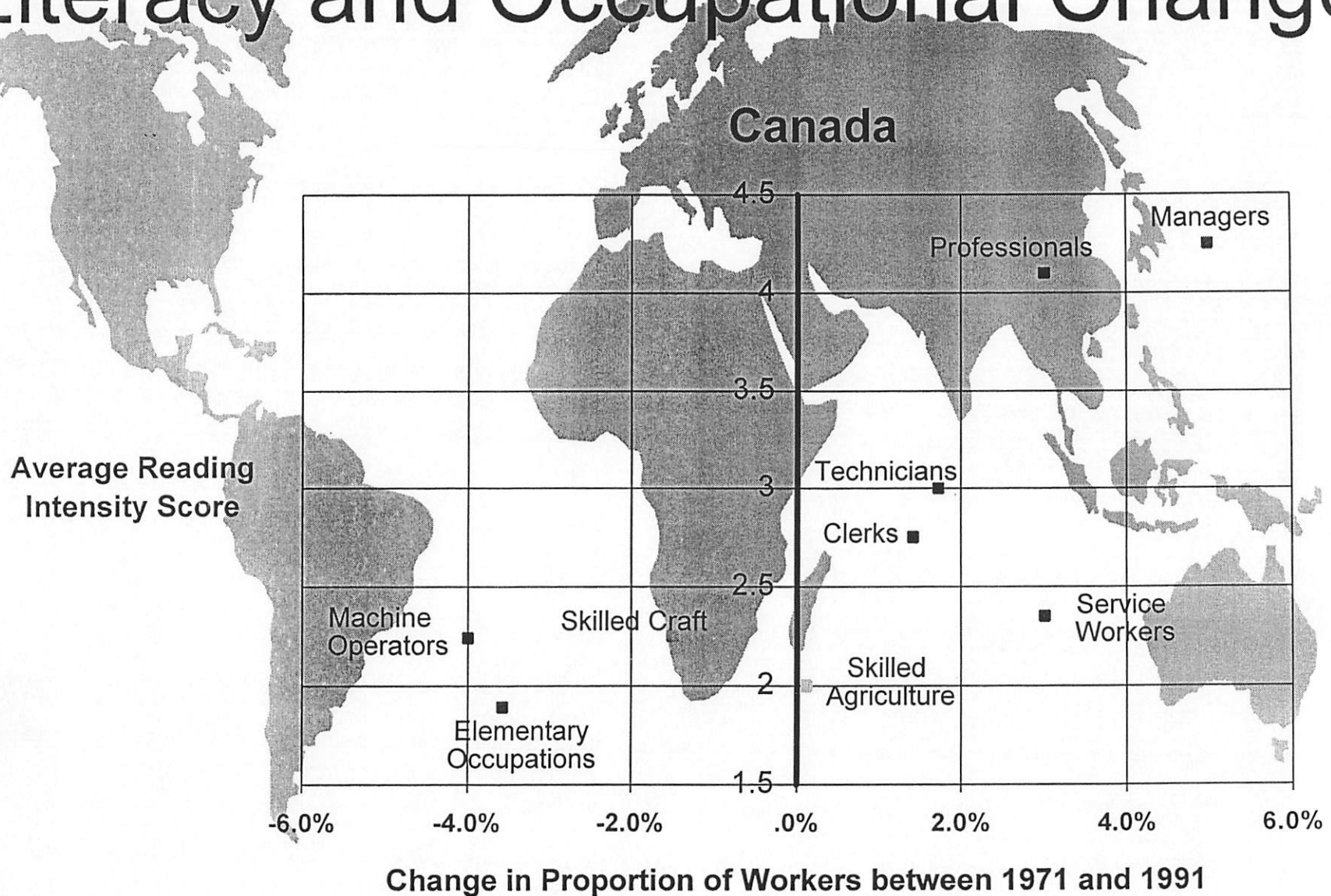
Literacy Practice at Work

Reading tasks at least once a week



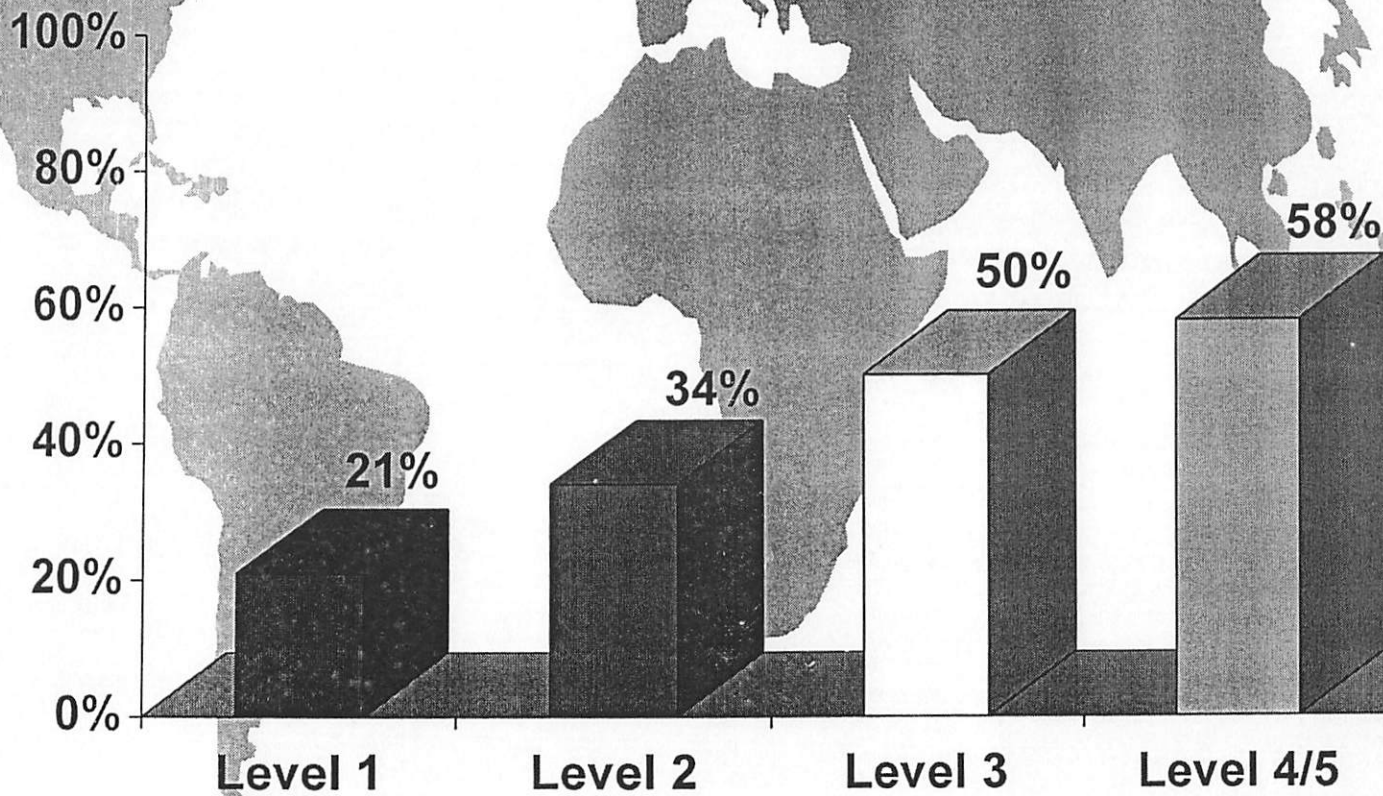
- bills, invoices, spreadsheets or budget tables (Document scale)
- diagrams or schematics (Document scale)
- reports, articles, magazines or journals (Prose scale)
- letters or memos (Prose scale)

Literacy and Occupational Change



Literacy and Training Participation

Prose Scale



Follow-up to IALS

- ♦ Canadian Monograph series
 - individual papers on key target groups
- ♦ Future IALS studies
 - Completion of first wave to produce data on Australia, New Zealand, Flemish Belgium and U.K.
 - Second wave will include: Austria, Belgium (French), Chile, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden (English), and possibly others

February 21, 1997

RECEIVED MAR - 3 1997

Stacey Huget
LITERACY BC
#622 - 510 W. Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC
V6B 1L8

Dear Stacey:

This will confirm that you and Lynda Mitchell are requested to do a presentation on the IALS study for the Apprentice & Training Coordinators meeting of the BC&YT-B&CTC.

The meeting we would like you to attend is as follows:

Date: March 13, 1997
Time: 9:00 am
Place: Painting Industry Trade School
12277 Industrial Road
Surrey, BC

The meeting will commence at 9:00 and will set aside 20 minutes or so for your presentation. I expect there will also be a number of questions and some lively discussion. The people who attend the meetings of this committee are deeply committed to making sure young people going through their apprentices have the resources they need to be successful.

Yours truly,



J.R. (Jim) Lippert
Executive Director

JRL

cc: Lynda Fownes
Allan Bruce

